

Inside Report Will Nitze Fit?

By Rowland Evans and Robert Novak

PRESIDENT KENNEDY has finally decided to take a calculated risk and elevate Paul Nitze, a self-assured egghead, to the second highest post in the Pentagon, just below another brilliant intellectual, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara.

The final decision was reached last Tuesday evening, when the President called in Roswell Gilpatric, the present Deputy Secretary of Defense, for a long heart-to-heart chat. McNamara had already signaled his approval of Nitze to succeed Gilpatric and Mr. Kennedy had made it clear that McNamara's choice would be his own choice.

Nevertheless, the President was somewhat concerned by the reaction of some of the shrewdest politicians in the Democratic Party, both in and outside of the official family. What worries the politicians is that two brilliant intellectuals at the top of the Department may turn out to be one too many for the thin-skinned patriarchs of Congress.

THAT'S not all. The Pentagon's public relations chief, Arthur Sylvester, has shown a genius for alienating Congress. And the man in charge of congressional affairs, David E. McGiffert, seems to lack that political sixth sense that made his predecessor, Norman Paul, an ace Pentagon trouble-shooter on Capitol Hill.

When the Kennedy Administration was gestating 2½ years ago, there was talk of Nitze getting a very high post. He was the State Department's policy planning chief in the last years of the Truman Administration and advised presidential nominee Kennedy on national security affairs.

And so after the election, Kennedy talent scouts eyed the handsome, polished Nitze as a possible Secretary of Defense. But when the reaction in Congress was less than enthusiastic, he was instead named him Assistant

Secretary for International Security Affairs.

NOW, AFTER skillfully serving in that job for more than two years, Nitze has dropped unmistakable hints that if he does not move up to Gilpatric's job he may move out of the Government.

Well, he's going to move up, not out. What this means is that McNamara will be reinforced at precisely those points where he needs no reinforcement. Nitze is a planner who has worked cheek-by-jowl with McNamara on basic U. S. strategy in Western defense planning. He understands Mr. Kennedy's and McNamara's concept of conventional vs. nuclear defense planning perhaps better than anyone in the Pentagon.

But what McNamara desperately needs in the No. 2 spot, as he encounters more and more flak from Congress, is not a reflection of himself but somebody with a talent for politics. No matter how they stretch him, the politicians can't fit Nitze into that mold.

PERHAPS the fears of the politicians are unjustified. Perhaps McNamara and Nitze will be able to tame Congress by sheer force of intellectual brilliance. But McNamara's ability to tame is declining as his reforms cut deeper. And in the harsh reality of congressional politics, intellectuality repels as often as it attracts.

The Nitze appointment won't be announced for some time. Gilpatric hopes to return to his New York law firm the end of June but has promised to stay in August if he's needed. Meanwhile, Kennedy men in Congress freely predict that the Nitze-for-Gilpatric shift will be a trouble for them, as relations between the Pentagon and Capitol Hill will go from bad to worse. Still, we don't get a full picture of the Nitze appointment until we won't have a complete picture of the situation.